



# Strategies For Recruiting and Retaining Students Into Nontraditional Programs

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## Strategies For Recruiting Nontraditional Students

While most of the suggestions that you will see refer to attracting and enrolling women into nontraditional programs, many of them will be successful for men as well. Some specific strategies include:

- ✓ Host a Nontraditional Career Day(s) to learn about and explore nontraditional careers. These Career Days are more successful if there are local women and men in nontraditional careers as role models.
- ✓ Issue a personal invitation to a girl (or boy) to attend a class or activity. Let her (him) know you think she/he has what it takes to be successful in your area and why.
- ✓ Create invitations for young women (men) to attend the class or activity and hand them out in the hallway randomly. Invite them to bring a friend.
- ✓ Make homeroom presentations indicating that you are seeking young women (men) who are interested in the class/program/vocational student organization.
- ✓ Bulletin board displays inviting girls (boys) to enroll.
- ✓ Flyers inviting young women to an activity or class.
- ✓ Talking with counselors and asking for their help in encouraging girls (boys) to enroll and stay in the class/program.
- ✓ Highlight women (men) in nontraditional programs and/or local women (men) in nontraditional careers in the school newspapers or local papers.

Since peer pressure can be a barrier, some positive peer pressure strategies that have been successful include:

- ✓ Invite especially popular young women (men) and others will follow.
- ✓ Invite young women (men) in friendship groups.
- ✓ Have young women (men) who are interested invite their friends.
- ✓ Give an award to the girl (boy) who invites and gets the most friends to join.

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Because many young women (men) are unable to picture themselves in a nontraditional career, some role model strategies that have been successful are:

- ✓ Presentations by successful female (male) alumni and senior female students in a nontraditional field.
- ✓ Presentations by nontraditional workers in the community in the targeted occupational area.
- ✓ An article in the student newspaper with information on the upcoming class that includes an interview with a successful alum in a nontraditional field.
- ✓ Career Fairs with nontraditional career role models.
- ✓ Utilization of websites for women to chat with role models in various careers.

Consider including parents in any nontraditional career information activity as they often lack the awareness of the career possibilities. If they know of the salary, job benefits, and career paths of nontraditional careers, they may be more supportive of their student enrolling in a nontraditional career.

## Strategies for Retaining Nontraditional Students

The number one reason for young women and men dropping out of nontraditional classrooms is the negative peer pressure and not the class content. Consider these strategies:

- ✓ Top Down Message: Teachers do not allow teasing, harassment and baiting remarks in the classroom or school.
- ✓ Respond quickly to harassment of any kind.
- ✓ Model the behavior that you want your students to emulate.
- ✓ Pair students with students of the opposite sex who are popular or who are particularly helpful to assist the individual with gaining acceptance into the classroom.
- ✓ Help the students become an integral part of the classroom and not be setting them apart from their classmates.
- ✓ Provide teacher training in dealing with gender bias and sex stereotyping. This is critical because the male vocational education teacher is credited with being the key person in a woman's decision to pursue a nontraditional career.
- ✓ Provide individual counseling to encourage students to remain in classes that are new to them. Be understanding of their difficulties but encourage them to persevere.

Source: Iowa Department of Education, Bureau of Career and Technical Education, August 2000.